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California State Senate

SENATOR
LIZ FIGUEROA

TENTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

SENATE COMMITTEE ON
BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS
CHAIR

COMMITTEES:
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
INSURANCE
TRANSPORTATION



California Congressional Delegation
U.S. Congress
Washington D.C.
sent via fax

June 4, 2003

Dear California Congressional Member,

I am writing today to urge your attendance at a very important briefing on free trade agreements and the working poor taking place on Thursday, June 12 from 9-11:30 am at 2168 Rayburn House Building. Sponsored by the Congressional Progressive Caucus and Food First Institute for Food and Development Policy, this briefing offers an important opportunity to hear first hand some of the results of increased trade liberalization on America's working poor.

As the new chair of the California Senate Select Committee on International Trade Policy and State Legislation, a special committee of the California Legislature, I have become increasingly concerned that current international trade rules could seriously impair the ability of state and local lawmakers to address matters of public interest to their citizens. As representatives of the fifth largest economy in the world, and as a national and global leader on issues of economic development, labor and human rights standards, consumer protections and environmental sustainability, many of us in California have become deeply concerned that as the reach of international trade rules and sanctions expand, the traditional plenary power of the states in our federal system as the principal guardians of the health, safety and welfare of their citizens could contract, undermining more than two centuries of American constitutional values.

In addition to our serious concerns about the impact these kinds of agreements could have on the efficacy of our long standing democratic institutions, we are also troubled by the lack of enforceable protections for workers' rights and environmental sustainability. While we believe trade can yield substantial benefits and is of utmost importance to the economy of California, we also believe that trade agreements that undermine our traditional federalist powers jeopardize the public welfare and pose grave consequences for democracy.

We are proud to be participating in this important discussion, and urge your attendance.

COUNTIES OF ALAMEDA AND SANTA CLARA



I am enclosing recent correspondence from 29 members of the California Legislature to the United States Trade Representative Robert Zoellick regarding current negotiations on the General Agreements on Trade in Services (GATS) which will further illustrate our concerns.

Please feel free to call Anna Blackshaw of my staff at 916.322.8616 or e.mail her at anne.blackshaw@sen.ca.gov if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Senator Liz Figueroa